



NEWS • News

SUBSCRIBER ONLY

Inland Empire must take these steps as big trucks ditch diesel, study says



This February 2024 photo shows battery chargers and electric-powered semi-trucks at NFI's Ontario truck depot. A new study says more must be done to ensure the Inland Empire addresses infrastructure and other concerns as trucks transition from diesel engines. (File photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)



By **JEFF HORSEMAN** | jhorseman@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

UPDATED: September 6, 2024 at 1:28 p.m.

The shift from diesel to electric truck engines is expected to clear the Inland Empire’s skies and lungs.

But before the region can breathe easy, it needs infrastructure and help for truckers struggling to afford the upcoming battery-powered era, [according to a new study](#) from a transportation think tank.

The study, released last month by the [Mineta Transportation Institute](#) at San José State University, outlines challenges to an electric truck future and what the Inland Empire — a [logistics](#) hub supplied by a seemingly endless stream of 18-wheelers — should do to solve them.

[View this document on Scribd](#)

“It’s an exciting time. It’s a time of transition,” said Kimberly Collins, a study co-author who also is executive director of the [William and Barbara Leonard Transportation Center](#) and a professor of public administration at Cal State San Bernardino.

“But with that, we need to have really good flows of information and communication so that everyone really understands what the transition means and how to access it,” Collins said. “Also, more work needs to be done to support the transition.”

Exhaust from diesel-powered, warehouse-serving trucks has been a bane for decades in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, which routinely score among the worst in the nation in the [American Lung Association’s annual air quality report cards](#).

[Read More](#)

00:00

02:40

Those fumes, according to doctors and public health officials, are linked to cancer, heart disease, asthma and other health problems. At the same time, warehouses and the trucking industry are a major employer in the region with a largely blue-collar workforce.

Government mandates set timelines for California trucks to ditch diesel for zero-emission technology. By 2035, large drayage trucks, like the kind ferrying goods from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to Inland warehouses, must use zero-emission engines under the California Air Resources Board’s [Advanced Clean Fleets Regulation](#).

The study, which took about a year and a half to complete, lauds not only the expected drop in air and noise pollution associated with diesel engines, but also the local green-industry jobs that could come with the transition to electric vehicles.

But while large trucking companies have the money to convert their fleets, the same can't be said for smaller, independent operators facing costs of \$500,000 to buy a new all-electric, heavy-duty truck compared to \$250,000 for a used diesel truck, the study found.

"A majority of smaller firms, starting from an unequal position without adequate resources, might find the investment too high and the transition too complex, possibly forcing them to find alternative employment or retire from the sector," the study read.

The study also noted that electric trucks "often face limitations in terms of range and payload capacities."

"The additional weight of electric batteries can limit the extra cargo that can be carried safely and efficiently," the study continued. "Also, the battery drain caused by the additional weight of (battery-powered trucks versus diesel trucks) can decrease the maximum range"

The study mentions federal, state and local incentives and rebates encouraging the purchase of electric trucks. "As the (electric truck) market evolves and expands, maintaining a focus on equitable access and support will be key in achieving a sustainable and inclusive future in transportation and economic development," the study found.

The state air resources board has a number of programs to help truckers buy electric-powered vehicles, according to information provided by board spokesperson Kate Lamb. These include a [zero-emission truck loan pilot program](#) and a [program](#) that helps trucking companies with 20 or fewer trucks and annual revenue of less than \$15 million lease non-diesel trucks.

"The switch to zero-emissions freight transportation does require coordination on complex infrastructure needs, support to small business owners and attention to issues that frontline communities have long faced," Lamb said via email.

"This is especially important in the Inland Empire, a region that is at the heart of the goods movement in the state and it is integral to the success of the zero-emissions future."

The study also urges creating a truck battery-charging network tailored to the Inland Empire. Different kinds of trucks — big rigs vs. delivery trucks, for example — are more prevalent depending where you are in the region, and charging infrastructure needs to cater to those needs rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, according to the study.

Unless the right infrastructure is in place, "we're not going to be able to make the transition within the time frame that everyone's looking at," said Paul Granillo, CEO of the [Inland Empire Economic Partnership](#), which seeks to promote economic development in the region.

The current timetables for going to zero-emission vehicles aren't doable "because the infrastructure isn't there," Granillo said. "And the electricity to feed the grid isn't there."

He added: "I believe that the transition is going to come. I think we need to work together. I think we need to be realistic about technology and infrastructure and the cost. But if we work together, we can get there."

Originally Published: September 6, 2024 at 1:25 p.m.



Around the Web

REVCONTENT

Arizona: Say Bye to Your Car Insurance Bill if You Live in These Zip Codes

Otto Quotes

Gold: the Last Line of Defense From the Ticking Time-bomb in Your Retirement

American Hartford Gold